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A

PLAIN AND EARNEST

ADDRESS

TO

BRITONS,

ESPECIALLY

FARMERS,

ON THE

Intereſting State of Public Affairs

IN

GREAT BRITAIN AND FRANCE.

By a FARMER. K

"When Miſchief is once begun, there is no knowing when it will end."

Works of T. Paine.

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1792.

A

PLAIN and EARNEST ADDRESS.

BROTHER FARMERS,

YOUR attention, has doubtleſs, been led to a publication, called "The Rights of Man" and an Engliſhman muſt have a wonderful propenſity to confound his friends and his foes, who does not diſcover in that work a ſteady and deliberate plan to ſap and undermine the happineſs and proſperity of Great Britain. It appears that Mr. PAINE has not only been long actuated by, but that he formerly gloried in avowing, an implacable animoſity and rooted hatred to this country; and *that* not merely to its Government, but to its intereſts, its welfare, its national Character, its national honour, its commercial and naval greatneſs. In violation of his natural allegiance (being born a britiſh ſubject) he ſtrained every nerve to increaſe the animoſity ſubſiſting between the Mother-country and her Colonies, and to prevent any accommodation from taking place. His pen was conſtantly employed during the American war, in widening the breach which all good Engliſhmen ſincerely deplored; and in promoting that final ſeparation between England and America, which was then conſidered as an event the moſt fatal that could poſſibly happen to the former Country. Since that period, the unexpected, the unexampled, the daily-increaſing proſperity of

Great

Great Britain, the harmony, the loyalty, and the happineſs of its inhabitants, furniſhed a diſappointment too ſevere to be endured with any degree of compoſure. Theſe were ſcenes which harrowed up the ſoul of the envious and malignant *Fiend*, who, like his *progenitor*, bent his courſe to this Paradiſe of the Globe, eager to deſtroy that felicity which it was not in his nature either to partake of or endure,

But the good ſenſe of the Engliſh People is no more to be deluded *by artifice* than their vigour is to be vanquiſhed *by force*. They are not to be perſuaded to part with the ſubſtance for the ſhadow. They can diſtinguiſh between the ſincere and honeſt advice of rational friends, and the wily enſnaring addreſſes of inſidious foes. They can detect treachery, and defeat malice. They are not ſo ſhort-ſighted as to believe, that in 1792 the man would counſel them to their good, who a few years before was labouring at their deſtruction. And ſenſible that under the friendly influence of their moſt excellent Conſtitution, and of the happieſt poſſible form of Government, they not only enjoy the greateſt degree of perſonal freedom, as well as of perſonal ſecurity, that can exiſt in ſociety, but have alſo riſen, within the ſhort ſpace of eight years, from penury to affluence and from deep and accumulated diſtreſs to great and unexampled proſperity; rejoiced alſo that the fruits of theſe great and manifold advantages have already begun to appear in an alleviation of their burthens, they are not to be induced to ſtop the career of their greatneſs, and to replunge into a ſtate of confuſion and calamity, worſe even than that from which they have ſo happily emerged.

The fearful events which are at preſent paſſing in France, with a rapidity of miſchief that ſurpaſſes equally all that Hiſtory has to offer, or Fancy to conceive, afford a ſpectacle intereſting to every man who poſſeſſes a PROPERTY; and to none more than to FARMERS. The quarrel now raging in that once flouriſhing kingdom, is not between liberty and tyranny, or between protecting and oppreſſive ſyſtems of government; it is, on the contrary, collected to a ſingle point —It is alone a queſtion of property.—It is a trial at arms, whether

whether thoſe that have *nothing* ſhall not ſeize and poſſeſs the property of thoſe who have *ſomething*. A dreadful queſtion—a horrid ſtruggle—which can never end but in the equal and univerſal ruin of ALL. In which, he who gains by the loſs of his neighbour, gains but to loſe, in his turn, to ſome ſturdier robber, till riot and confuſion render property but the ſignal of invaſion, and poverty the beſt ſhield againſt the attacks and tyranny of the mob.

The watch word, from one end of France to the other, is *equality*; they join liberty with it, as mountebanks annex a favourite epithet to the noſtrum, whoſe only object is the money in the pockets of the credulous. But after all rank, title, nobility, and diſtinction have been aboliſhed, what do they mean by equality? The word is abſurd if it attaches not to property, for there can be no equality while one man is rich and another poor.

There is information which can be relied on, that the farmers whoſe occupations are *large*, on compariſon with the general ſize of farms, are under the moſt abominable oppreſſion; an arbitrary and deſpotic mob obliges them to ſell their products at a fixed price; ſetting the price of all proviſions at the rates agreeable to their intereſt; and have, in innumerable inſtances, taken the corn brought to market at no price at all. To avoid this injuſtice, the farmers have abſtained from appearing in the markets; and ſuch a conduct has been puniſhed by fine, impriſonment, and forfeiture; and decrees have even been paſſed for their expulſion, and dividing their farms among ſuch as have choſen to ſeize them. In the levying of taxes, the moſt abominable tranſactions have diſgraced the kingdom; while the proprietors of a few acres, who every where form the majority of each municipality, eſcape all taxation, they are vigilant in forcing every man of more conſiderable property to pay to the laſt farthing; and as all taxes are aſſeſſed and levied by parochial vote, at aſſemblies, to which *all* reſort, the men without property order every thing at will, and have various ways, much more effective, for the diviſion of property, than the moſt direct levelling principle could ſuggeſt.

Let the farmers of this kingdom repreſent to themſelves a picture of what their ſituation would be, if their labourers, their ſervants, and the paupers whom they ſupport by poor-rates, were all armed, and in poſſeſſion of the veſtry, voting not only the money to be raiſed by rates, but the diviſion of it among themſelves; decreeing what the price of all the farmers' products ſhould be; what wages ſhould be paid to ſervants, and what pay to labourers. Under ſuch a ſyſtem of government I beg to aſk, what ſecurity would remain for a ſingle ſhilling in the pockets of thoſe who are at preſent in a ſtate of eaſe and competence? And whether ſuch a ſtate of tyranny would not be worſe than that of the moſt determined deſpotiſm at preſent in Europe.

Theſe facts are ſtated as having taken place in France; to ſay that they have every where taken place would be an exaggeration; but the *power* is, throughout the kingdom, *in the hands of the multitude*, and after knowing the uſe that has been made of that power, iu ſo many ſtriking inſtances, it may, in all truth of argument, be aſked, whether the principle of ſuch exceſſes be not admitted and proteſſed the inſtant the power of a kingdom is lodged in any hands but thoſe that have ſome property in it.

From what has all the abominations practiſing in France ariſen? The queſtion is anſwered in a few words: from the laws being ſubmitted to the will, and the power being lodged in the hands of the Mob;—from thoſe fine-ſpun ſpeculations of the "Rights of Man" being carried into effect, on which the late tranſactions in France are the beſt comment, aud the moſt ſatisfactory reply.

I revere the manly ſpirit and underſtanding to be found in my contrymen of the loweſt order. Their generous hearts, I truſt, would abhor the idea of imbruing their hands in the blood of women;—of cowardly butchering thoſe unfortunate men who had it not in their power to reſiſt. That ſyſtem of daſtardy aſſaſſination, which was ſuggeſted by the Jacobins in France, would, I truſt, meet with little encouragement in this country. But popular ty-

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ranny is a catching phrenzy, and the moſt dreadful diſorders muſt enſue, where all the property of ſociety is at the mercy of thoſe who poſſeſs nothing. Attack and plunder will ſurely follow power in ſuch hands. And I would live in Turkey rather than in England, if the wild and prepoſterous propoſitions founded on the "Rights of Man" were to become effective in this kingdom. In other words, I have property; and I do not chuſe to live where the firſt beggar I meet may, the ſabre in one hand, and *Rights of Man* in the other, demand a ſhare of that which a good government tells me is my *own*.

That there were many reſpectable men in this country who wiſhed well to the conſtitution of France, as eſtabliſhed in 1789, is not to be doubted, and theſe perſons aſſert, with reſpect to the power being put into the hands of the people, ſo far would we have gone and no farther; but they forget that by going ſo far they have given the power from their own hands, and have themſelves made for outrage and diſorder, an inlet, which they have no longer power to cloſe. But if theſe men may be excuſed for an error in judgment, let it not for a moment be imagined that there is any thing reſpectable in the levellers, your fellows of the "Rights of Man," whoſe principles are not a jot better than thoſe of highwaymen and houſebreakers; for the object of both is *equalizing property*. The farmers ſhould never forget, that the ſame principle which attacks a property of 10,000l. a year, becauſe it is too large relatively to other properties, attacks alſo a farm of 200l. a year, for the ſame reaſon; nay, of 50l. a year, becauſe that alſo is large, when compared with the property of thoſe who have little.

It is curious enough to compare the original *French declaration of Rights*, and the ſubſequent practice of the National Aſſembly. It is there aſſerted, *that no man can be accuſed, arreſted, or detained, except in caſes determined by the law, and according to the forms which the law has preſcribed.* Such is the letter: what is the practice? On complaints from Niort, againſt ſome counter-revolutioniſts, ſeized by a mob thirſting for their blood, but who wiſhed to have the flimſy cloak of a ſemblance of juſtice, the

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY decreed, "that all the criminal tribunals of the kingdom ſhould try, without appeal, all crimes committed againſt the revolution. And in order to indulge the ſame thirſt at Paris, which was not with all its murders ſatiated, they decreed the removal of the criminals from Orleans to Paris; that is, from the legally eſtabliſhed judicature, where there was a chance of juſtice, to an illegal one, where there was no ſuch chance; and they did this in conſequence of the moſt brutal and inſulting addreſſes from the deputation of the commons of Paris.

The declaration ſays, that *no man can be puniſhed but in virtue of a law eſtabliſhed, and promulgated prior to the offence, and legally applied.* But the NATIONAL ASSEMBLY decreed that diſobedience to their orders, in the colonies, "ſhall be regarded as high treaſon, and thoſe who ſhall render themſelves guilty, ſhall be ſent to France to be tried according to the rigour of the law."

The liberty of the preſs was provided for in the declaration. Such the theory. The practice was ſilencing all that were not *Jacobin* papers, and beheading the authors.

Purſue the declaration of rights through every article, and it will be found that there is not one, regiſtered as an impreſcriptible right of man, that has not been violated under circumſtances of the moſt odious and abominable cruelty.

An Engliſhman is proud of the idea of his houſe being his caſtle; ſee the practice of *Jacobin* government in this reſpect! "Decreed that the municipalities are authoriſed to ſearch the houſes of all perſons for arms, and to take an account of horſes and carriages applicable to the war." And ſoon after their abſolute ſeizure decreed. This was ſounding the alarm bell in order to give up the houſes of all the gentlemen in the kingdom to the plunder of an armed rabble; and this act of tyranny, by the legiſlature itſelf.

If we are aſked what apology the tyrants of Paris have to make for their actions, their anſwer is STATE EXPEDIENCY; which an Engliſh reformer calls the *offspring of hell.*

On whatever ſubject, ſcience, or enquiry, practice is the only comment, there is no other teſt. When that prince of incendiaries, PAINE, reviewing a train of his projects aſks with an air of triumph after each, *would not this be a good thing? This ſurely would be a good thing!* In like manner, taking up the French declaration of the "Rights of Man" there is hardly an article to be found, to which the ſame writer and an hundred others, would not annex the ſame queſtion, *is not this good? Can you deny this?* But when we come to eſtimate theſe trees of goodly appearance, by the fruit they have produced, we ſhall find—The right of reſiſtance againſt oppreſſion—*became the power to oppreſs.* The right to liberty—*crammed every priſon on ſuſpicion.* The right to ſecurity—*fixed it at the point of the pike.* The right to property—*was the ſignal of plunder.* And the right to life—*became the power to cut throats.* ARE THESE GOOD THINGS? If declarations of rights and governments founded on them are really good, the reſult muſt be good alſo. But theſe, my brother farmers, are the good things in practice, that flow in a direct line from the good things of French theory,

A gentleman in his late publication, talks of *temperate reformation,* and of *pointing the zeal of the people to a moderate correction of grievances.* As if it were poſſible, after rouſing, by inflammatory publications, the mobbiſh ſpirit, that you could draw the line of *moderation,* beyond which the populace ſhould not paſs? You want to correct grievances by means of *the people*; who, with power to effect the purpoſe, muſt have power to do much more. If they have that power, will they uſe it? GO TO PARIS FOR THE ANSWER.

Power in the hands *of a mob,* has ruined France. And the queſtion in England is, whether the farmers and land proprietors ſhall preſerve their property ſecure, by one and all conſidering the

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ſyſtem with the horror it merits; or ſhall, by doubt and heſitation, unite with the enemies of public peace, and hazard all that we poſſeſs at preſent.

Give us our rights, is an expreſſion which has been uſed with ſingular emphaſis; the reply once proper, was an abſtract reaſoning on the nature of thoſe rights: we have now ſomething much ſurer to direct our judgments; and can anſwer with ſtrict reference to the facts that govern the queſtion, "you have your rights;" you are in the poſſeſſion of every right that is conſiſtent with ſafety to the life and property of others.—To give you more will endanger both, —To give you *much* more will infallibly deſtroy them, and eventually yourſelves. You have, therefore, ALL your rights, for you have all that are conſiſtent with your happineſs; and thoſe who aſſociate to gain more, ſeek, by means which they know to be the high road to confuſion, to ſeize what is NOT their right, at the expence of crimes ſimilar to thoſe that have deſtroyed one of the firſt kingdoms in the world.

There is in this country, and I glory in the recollection, a ſpirit of attention to the labouring part of the community far beyond what is the caſe in any other kingdom in the world. The heart and the purſe of the employer is never ſhut againſt the diſtreſſes of his induſtrious labourer. The liberality of the affluent hath in every quarter provided hoſpitals for the deceaſed in mind and body; ſchools for the ignorant and untutored; and bread for thoſe who are not able to earn it themſelves. The peaſantry in England, when honeſt and induſtrious, are the happieſt upon the face of the earth. And long may they continue ſo! But adieu to every thing like peace and pleaſure, if once the levelling principles of Mr. PAINE become the object of their deſire. Such a ſyſtem, like a peſtilential vapour, will bring diſeaſe, idleneſs, and diſcontent, with all their train of miſchief along with it. Diſſatisfied with his own condition, and envious of his neighbour's proſperity, the now induſtrious labourer will loſe all thoſe ſweet conſolations which flow from a conſciouſneſs of having done his duty, and from the aſſurance of receiving his reward

reward. That happy ſtate of honeſt contentment, which in point of real happineſs leaves him nothing to regret in the condition of the firſt among mankind.

For the curſe of theſe principles of equality is, that they never can allow tranquility to be the inheritance of a people; ſuppoſing it poſſible for a Country, infeſted with ſuch doctrines, to be well governed, ſuch good government will infallibly generate wealth and inequality; and by conſequence the neceſſity of new civil wars and confuſion to reſtore the equality which would for ever tend to variation. Thus, under ſuch fine-ſpun principles, peace would never inhabit; tranquility would be baniſhed, even by the merits ſuppoſing there were any, of the ſyſtem; and new arrangements of property would be periodically to make, as the caprice and tyranny of thoſe who, poſſeſſing nothing, would look to confuſion as their ſupport, and to anarchy as their birth-right.

Traders and manufacturers, of every deſcription, although their ſufferings in popular inſurrections are generally very ſevere, can frequently convert their wealth into money, and fly with it on paper wings wherever property remains ſecure; but the farmer is chained to a ſpot. His property is inveſted in the ſoil he cultivates; —he has no power of movement;—he muſt abide the beating of the ſtorm, be it pitileſs as it may.—To him therefore the new fangled doctrines of equality ought to appear in all their native deformity; for they are doctrines that tend directly to his deſtruction; and from whoſe peſtilential influence he cannot, like others, fly.

I have given you a plain ſtatement of facts at this time peculiarly intereſting, as all engines are at work to make you fall in love with anarchy, turbulence, and ſedition. I hope every one who has the ſpirit and underſtanding of a man, will ſet his face againſt thoſe poiſoners of the public mind, thoſe inſidious earwigs who would creep into and corrupt, that which they cannot openly ſubdue. Let thoſe who are fond of French politics and French government, tranſport themſelves to France, like their friend PAINE, and there hatch their

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treaſons againſt their native land. If they are fond of ſcenes of horror and diſtreſs, they may there indulge their propenſities to the utmoſt. A thirſt of blood, at which ſavages would bluſh, and from which humanity would ſtart back appalled; their trade and manufactures annihilated; their agriculture cramped and fettered; honour, religion, and honeſty, trampled under foot. If for theſe, we are to diſmiſs our love to the king, our reverence for the conſtitution and laws, our proſperity, liberty, and happineſs,—avert from Britons, oh! merciful heaven! the wretched infatuation. Teach them to know and to feel the genuineneſs of the bleſſings which diſtinguiſh this happy land. Free that land from the clamours of the ſeditious, the murmurs of the diſcontented, and the ſecret as well as open deſigns of wicked and unprincipled men. To this prayer whoever has the love of his country warm at his heart, will fervently, and with all his ſpirit, ſay, Amen.

THE END.